

Kansas Rape Prevention and Education Program: Q&A

Q: What is your program goal?

A: The goal of the Rape Prevention and Education Program (RPE) is to help young boys and girls to develop a level of emotional intelligence that will enable them to distinguish what behavior is appropriate for the purpose of preventing inappropriate aggressive behavior. Program activities may incorporate any organized acts such as media promotions, instructive services, public policies, research projects, etc. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1999; Pruett, 2000).

The RPE Program is intended to complement efforts by parents, caregivers, and schools to facilitate the emotional development of boys and girls.

An additional purpose of RPE is to counter negative messages about girls and women that are present in the popular culture through television, music, video games, and movies. It is worth noting that these negative messages are often specifically targeted against young boys. The existence of such negative messages does not provide excuses for sexual violence, but these messages often contribute to perceptions that can lead to wrong behaviors.

Q: How is the success of RPE evaluated?

A: An evaluation component is used to measure the effectiveness of the program in changing attitudes and behaviors of RPE program participants. The RPE program defines the evaluation as the methodical application of scientific techniques to appraise the development, implementation, improvement needs or effect of a program (Rossi & Freeman, 1993; Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1999; Pruett, 2000). For example, participants are asked a series of questions at the beginning of the program. The same questions are then asked at the program's completion and the results are compared.

Q: What is the principal demographic for perpetrators of sexual violence in Kansas?

A: Although it is possible for rapes to be committed by almost anyone, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) has documented that of reported rapes in Kansas, males between the ages of 1 and 19 are among the most frequent perpetrators. This is not a reflection of males in general; rather the statistics bear out this demographic as an appropriate audience for the RPE message. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, released 1998).

Q: Does race or economic status affect the likelihood of sexual violence against women?

A: No. Violence against women is a problem that pervades our society, regardless of race or economic status. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, released 1998).

Q: Why is rape education considered a public health issue? Isn't that a parental responsibility?

A: Helping boys and girls to develop mature attitudes towards health relationships is definitely a parental responsibility, and parental involvement in the RPE program has always been encouraged.

Rape prevention and educational efforts are considered public health issues because of the societal costs incurred due to violence against women. These costs include increased demand for medical and psychiatric services, law enforcement resources, childcare, compensation for lost employment, a substance abuse treatment services.

Overall, rape has the highest annual victim costs at \$127 billion per year (excluding child sex abuse), followed by assault at \$93 billion, murder (excluding arson and drunk driving) at 61 billion, and child abuse at \$56 billion. (National Institute of Justice, released February 1996).

Q: What specific efforts are being made as part of the local campaign to prevent rape and sexual aggression in schools?

A: Segments of a weekly curriculum are provided to students by the local rape prevention education grantee. Length of the weekly curriculum varies from site to site in a range from three to eleven-week curriculums. Decisions on length and content of the curriculum are made on the local level as RPE grantees work with school administrators to tailor the curriculum for school schedules and topics of need.

Some topics that can be offered in the rape prevention and education curriculum include but are not limited to the following: violence in society, TV violence and stereotypes, gender roles, positive relationships, personal boundaries and sexual harassment, sexual assault, communication, personal power and saying no, interpersonal competence, anger management, and conflict resolution.

Q: Why is rape education programming being conducted in public school? Isn't the focus of public school on academics?

A: The RPE program is about education. It is appropriate the program be presented in an educational setting, since the purpose is to provide knowledge to school-aged children.

Additionally, school is often the place where boys and girls first interact. Providing the right knowledge at his time can lead to healthy relationships now and in the future.

Research indicates forty-five percent of elementary schools reported one or more violent incidents compared with 74 percent of middle and 77 percent of high schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Likewise, eighty-three percent of high school females and 64.9 % of high school males say another student touched, grabbed, or pinched them in a sexual way. (American Educational Research Association released 1993).

Q: What is sexual harassment in public schools?

A: Sexual harassment happens as unwanted and uninvited behavior of a sexual type that can hinder an individual's ability to obtain equal educational opportunities. It is a kind of sex discrimination that is forbidden by Title IX, a Federal law instituting civil rights in education focusing on issues of sex discrimination and, by judicial precedent, sexual harassment (U.S. Dept. of Education Office of Civil Rights, downloaded 1/25/02; Stein, 2000). Sexually harassing behaviors that can interfere with one's educational opportunity include words (written and spoken) and signals to unwanted touching and some of the behaviors may also be criminal acts such as assault and rape, attempted or completed and child sexual abuse (Stein, 2000).

Q: Is there a set number of boys and girls that participate in the program?

A: The RPE program is designed with an emphasis on local autonomy. The State provides resources and guidelines, while educational decisions (such as the number of participants and topics to include in the curriculum) are made at the local level.

Q: How long has this program been in operation?

A: The Rape Prevention and Education Program have been operational in Kansas since 1996.

References

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